DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 361 077 PS 021 584

AUTHOR Weiss, Karin; Krappmann, Lothar
TITLE Parental Support and Children's Social Integration.
PUB DATE Mar 93
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (60th, New Orleans, LA, March 25-28, 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Child Behavior; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Students; Foreign Countries; Friendship; *Interpersonal Competence; *Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Influence; *Peer Relationship; Popularity; Sex Differences; Social Behavior; Sociometric Techniques
IDENTIFIERS Emotional Support; Germany (Berlin); *Sociometric Status

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of different types of parental support on children's social integration in peer relationships in middle childhood. Subjects were 116 second- through fifth-grade children from an inner-city primary school in Berlin (West), who were interviewed about their friends. Sociometric tests were also conducted. The parents of these children were interviewed separately at home about their support behaviors and other behaviors relevant for their child's peer interactions and relationships. Results indicated that although mothers' and fathers' support behaviors were correlated, the impact of mothers' and fathers' behaviors on the child's relationships varied with the child's gender. Multiple regression analyses showed that daughters' and sons' social integration could be predicted by mothers' and fathers' support behaviors, especially the behaviors categorized as "shaping of conditions" (behaviors that express concern and facilitate their child's peer interactions). Mediation (defined as immediate involvement in the child's peer interactions) and consultation (defined as coaching and counseling of the child) were less beneficial or were counterproductive to the child's social integration. The results suggest that certain parental behaviors may be elicited by the child's position among peers. (MM)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 361 077

# PARENTAL SUPPORT AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL INTEGRATION

**Karin Weiss**
Freie Universität Berlin
Institute for Sociology of Education
Arnimallee 11
D-1000 Berlin 33, FRG

**Lothar Krappmann**
Max Planck Institute for
Human Development and Education
Lentzeallee 94
D-1000 Berlin 33, FRG

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Karin Weiss
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

PS 021584

Poster presented at the 60th Anniversary Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, New Orleans, Lousiana, USA, March 25 - 28, 1993.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# PARENTAL SUPPORT AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

K. Weiss & L. Krappmann

## 1. General question

The contribution of peer interaction to the development of competencies of the child has become an important topic of interest for many researchers in the past decades. Piaget (1932), Sullivan (1953), and Youniss (1980) maintain that children's interactions with partners of equal ranking and comparable experience present promoting challenges which the child meets by developmental progress. This promotion of competencies will only take place when children for themselves try to understand the problems to be solved, to coordinate perspectives and intentions of the participating children, and to reach an agreement on acceptable solutions.

As many studies have demonstrated, younger children need parental support to establish these stimulating interactions with peers and friends (see reviews by Ladd, 1991; Parke & Bhavnagri, 1989; Putallaz & Heflin, 1990). When children grow older, they begin to establish a domain of social life among children that is increasingly less under control of parents and other caretakers. The observation of these steps to more autonomy elicits the question whether still in middle childhood children need parental support in order to establish peer interactions and to make friends. We hypothesize that children still need support, but that parents have to recognize the children's increasing capacities of regulating their interactions and relationships with other children. In this study we want to investigate by which means parents can effectively influence their children's position among agemates in middle childhood.

Ladd (1991) distinguishes four domains of parental behaviors which can influence the child's peer relationships and which still wait for further investigation: (1) the family background and history (cultural, ethnic, and social traditions as well as biographical experiences), (2) the social and economic milieu in which the family is embedded, (3) the family relationships and processes, and (4) the efforts of parents to promote and manage their child's experiences with peers. The analyses presented here refer to the last domain parental influence on their child's peer relationships.

According to Ladd parents may adopt four types of roles in order to promote their children's peer interactions. They may

- *design* the social environment in which relationships take place, e.g. by providing a safe play environment;
- *mediate* relationships, e.g. by arranging play contacts;
- act as *consultants* of their child, e.g. by giving advice how to negotiate interactions; and they may
- *monitor* their children's peer interactions and relationships, especially when children become older, e.g. by offering guidance with regard to interpersonal concerns and problems.

Other authors use similar distinctions. Bhavagnari and Parke (1991) differentiate between direct interventions by which parents intend to initiate, promote or change their child's relationships (e.g. by supervising the child and managing relationships) and indirect influences which do not refer to the child's relationships, yet affect them. Putallaz and Heflin (1990) call direct those behaviors which further or restrain the child's social capacities ( e.g. attachment, modeling), and indirect those behaviors by which parents enhance or diminish the child's opportunities for social interaction e.g. by "setting the stage".

These distinctions are especially relevant when we want to investigate by which means parents can influence the social integration of children in middle childhood. While young children are in need of permanent supervision and narrow control (Bhavnagri & Parke, 1991), older children's social relationships in contrast may be hampered by their parents' permanent guidance and active intervention (Krappmann, 1989). In order to explore these changes in the quality of effective support behaviors, we did not only examine behaviors by which parents intervene in peer interactions or assist their child with the explicit intention of improving peer interactions or relationships, but we also focused on several behaviors which refer to conditions under which the child organizes and conducts peer interactions and relationships.

Thus, we differentiate three levels of parental support with regard to the ways in which parents attempt to foster their child's social integration into peer relationships (cf. Figure 1). Parents may aim at an improvement of the interaction itself, at an improvement of the interaction capacities of the child, or at an improvement of the conditions under which these interactions take place:

---

Insert Figure 1 about here

---

(1) *Mediation*: Direct active involvement of the parents in their child's peer interactions and relationships (similar to Ladd's concept).
(2) *Consultation*: Coaching and counseling, by which parents intend to improve their child's social capacities, but do not intervene in ongoing processes among children.
(3) *Shaping of conditions*: Opportunities offered by parents to their child that facilitate or aggravate peer interactions and relationships. These behaviors shape the climate of empathy and concern in which peer interactions and relationships can be realized. These shaping behaviors of parents comprise:

*room for action* conceded to the child and which the child can use to organize peer activities;
parents' *awareness of their child's meetings* with friends;
parents' *awareness of conflicts* between their child's family and peer obligations;
parents' *knowledge about the friendships* which their child maintains; and parents' *knowledge about the places* where their child actually meets friends.

Research has shown that the gender of parents and children influences the effects of the support behaviors applied by parents. Ladd and Golter (1988) found different patterns of promoting behaviors used by mothers and fathers. A study of MacDonald and Parke (1984) demonstrated, that the same parental support behavior had different impact on peer interactions of three- and four-year-olds when given by mothers or by fathers. According to the study of Russell and Russell (1987), parents use different behaviors with regard to the gender of the child which they want to support.

Children's social integration is mostly assessed by sociometric tests, although this procedure measures popularity and not existing relationships. We, therefore, add other measures of social integration which are based on children's nominations and descriptions of their maintained relationships in an interview about friends.

First we will examine whether supportive behaviors of parents still have impact on their child's social relationships in middle childhood. Second we will analyze the differential effects of the three levels of parental support on children's social integration. We expect that the behaviors belonging to the category "shaping of conditions" will be the most effective strategies when parents try to promote their child's peer interactions and relationships in middle childhood. We also expect a negative influence of those parental procedures which most directly intervene into children's social life, i.e. by "mediating" children's interactions. Third, we will examine the role of the parent's and the child's gender with regard to the influence of support behaviors. We finally want to explore, whether various aspects of children's social

integration are differently influenced by parents' attempts to support their child's social relationships.

## 2. Method

The study comprises 116 children and their parents. The children were second to fifth graders (age 7;5 to 12;2 years, almost equally distributed across the age groups). Eighty-three of the children lived in two-parent families, 31 lived with their mother, and 2 children lived with their father. Thus, mothers of 113 children and the fathers of 79 children participated in the study. In two cases data could be collected of the single father only. The group of 116 target children included 65 boys and 51 girls. These children are a subgroup of a larger sample of 255 children comprehensively interviewed in school about their friends. Since only 24 children of twelve classrooms (9 percent) refused to be interviewed, this larger sample represented almost the entire age cohort of an inner-city school district where mainly middle and upper-lower class families are living. The children of the subsample and their families did not differ from the total group with regard to a number of variables which were available for the larger population as well as for the subgroup (family structure, sex, age, time in afternoon to meet friends, number and quality of children's peer relationships). Therefore, the smaller group of 116 children and their families also were a rather representative sample of families living in a normal urban school district.

Data on parental support behaviors were collected by standardized questionnaires administered to fathers and mothers separately in the family home. Five scales which measure different aspects of support behaviors were developed from these data. All scales demonstrate satisfying psychometric qualities.

> The scale "mediation" (alpha = .58 for mothers, .55 for fathers) includes three items concerning parental activities directly aiming at an improvement of their child's peer relationships (for instance, doing something together with the child's peers).

> The scale "consultation" (alpha = .75 for mothers, .82 for fathers) includes five items concerning parental efforts of coaching and counseling the child how to cooperate with peers.

The following three scales and two single-item measures relate to parental behaviors which shape the conditions under which peer contacts take place. By these behaviors parents influence the context of peer interactions and relationships.

> The scale "room for action" (alpha = .65 for mothers, .63 for fathers) includes five items referring to the opportunities for contacts with peers conceded to the child.

> The scale "awareness of meetings" (alpha = .73 for mothers, .76 for fathers) includes four items which measure how much attention parents pay to the social contacts of their child.
> The scale "awareness of conflicts" (alpha = .63 for mothers, .55 for fathers) includes five items related to parents' concern about conflicts arising from the child's sometimes opposing obligations to peers and family (e.g., joining a family activity or following the invitation of a friend).
> "Knowledge of friends" measures the agreement of the parent and the child on three friendships by comparison of the child's nominations in the school interview and the parent's indications in the questionnaire adminstered in the family session. The congruence between the nominations of parents and children was ranked.
> "Knowledge of meeting places" based on the parents' self-assessment of their knowledge about where their child meets with peers.

Data on children's peer relationships were collected by a standardized interview about friends (Krappmann, Oswald, Salisch, Schuster; Uhlendorff, Weiss, 1991), administered in school to each child separately. The child's social integration was measured by several indices. The first two indices are based on the child's answers given in the interview:

> (1) The total number of relationships with classmates and non-classmates nominated by the interviewed child.
> (2) The number of relationships to classmates nominated by the interviewed child.

Both numbers of relationships also include the "lukewarm" relationships. The number of relationships to classmates was selected as a criterion because other analyses showed that these relationships are especially important since the classroom is a place of crucial tests with regard to the quality of friendships (Oswald, Krappmann, Uhlendorff, Weiss, in press).

The following four indices of children's social integration could be generated, because almost all children of the classrooms who were included in the larger study of children's friendships participated in the sociometric test and in the friendship interview. Two indices are based on the nominations which the target child received from the classmates.

> (3) The number of relationship nominations received from classmates.
> (4) The number of reciprocal relationships based on congruent nominations from both the target child and his or her classmates.

Since these indices integrate the friendship statements of others, they go beyond the subjective assessment of the interviewed child. The index (4) counting the concordant nominations of the target child and the classmates gives the best information about factually maintained relationships.

The last two indices are based on the number of received votes in a conventional sociometric test ("three best liked", "three least liked"):
> (5) The number of positive votes received from classmates.
> (6) The number of negative votes (rejections) received from classmates.

We regard those children to be better integrated in peer relationships who nominated more friends in general and in the classroom, received more nominations from classmates, and maintained more reciprocal relationships in the classroom, received more positive votes and fewer rejections in the sociometric test.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Differences and similarities in the support behaviors of mothers and fathers

Mothers and fathers showed no differences with regard to mediation or consultation behaviors (cf. Table 1 presenting means and standard deviations of the parental support behaviors). In contrast, the behaviors categorized as shaping of conditions differed significantly between

---

Insert Table 1 about here

---

fathers and mothers (room for action $t = 2.94$, awareness of meetings $t = .76$, awareness of conflicts $t = -.69$, knowledge about friends $t = -1.77$, knowledge about meeting places $t = -1.54$, all differences significant: $p < .05$). Fathers more frequently reported to give room for action and were more aware of their children's meetings than mothers. Mothers, however, were more aware of conflicts between the child's diverging family and peer obligations. Fathers reported more knowledge about the places where children meet, whereas mothers were ranked significantly higher with regard to their knowledge of their children's friendships.

Although mothers and fathers showed differences in the frequencies of support behaviors applied, they tended to react in the same direction. Especially with regard to the behaviors categorized as shaping of conditions mothers and fathers agreed on the behaviors which they apply. When the mother held to give room for action, also the father reported to give room ($r = .44$, $p < .01$). When the mother was aware of conflicts, also the father was aware of conflicts ($r = .65$, $p < .01$). When the mother was well informed about the child's friends and meetings

places, also the father knew about friends and meeting places ($r = .44$, $p < .01$; $r = .50$, $p < .01$). Their agreement on consultation behaviors and on peer meetings was only moderate ($r = .20$, $p < .10$ resp. $p < .05$). Mothers and fathers did not agree on their behaviors with regard to the mediation of peer interactions and relationships. Mothers and fathers seem to use these ways of support rather independently from each other.

### 3.2 Differences with regard to children's age and gender

Maternal support behaviors did not change across the age of the children under study with one exception. Mothers more frequently conceded room for action to the child when the child became older ($r = .35$, $p < .01$). In contrast, paternal support behaviors yielded more correlations with the age of their children. Fathers' mediating behaviors showed a tendency to decrease with growing age of the children ($r = -.17$, $p < .10$). Like mothers fathers more frequently conceded room for action to older children ($r = .33$, $p < .01$). Fathers of older children were more aware of their children's peer meetings ($r = .16$, $p < .10$) and of conflicts between peer and family obligations ($r = -.18$, $p < .01$).

Correlational analyses also revealed some differences with regard to the gender of child. Mothers were more aware of conflicts between peer and family obligations in view of their sons than of their daughters ($r = -.18$, $p < .05$), and they tended to more frequently apply mediation and consultation behaviors with daughters than with sons ($r = .15$, $p < .10$; $r = .13$, $p < .10$). Fathers more seldomly reported awareness of meetings with regard to sons than to daughters ($r = -.28$, $p < .01$), but demonstrated more knowledge of their children's meeting places with regard to daughters than to sons ($r = .22$, $p < .05$).

### 3.3 Children's social integration

On the average, the 116 children nominated 8.8 relationships (sd = 3.6), among these were 4.2 relationships (sd = 2.5) with classmates. They were nominated also 4.2 times (sd = 2.6) by their classmates. The target children maintained 2.5 reciprocal relationships (sd = 1.6) within the classroom. Furthermore, the children on the average received 3.0 positive (sd = 1.98) and 2.1 negative (sd = 2.6) sociometric votes.

### 3.4 Parents' support behaviors and children's social integration

Bivariate correlational analyses of parents' behaviors and children's social integration show that mothers' and fathers' mediation as well as consultation behaviors yield very few correla-

tions with the measures of their children's social integration (Table 2). In contrast, behaviors shaping the conditions of peer interactions and relationships obviously were more relevant for

---

Insert Table 2 about here

---

the children's social integration. When mothers and fathers conceded more room for action, their children tended to be better integrated, according to several measures. In particular, they maintain significantly more reciprocal relationships in the classroom. If mothers or fathers reported more awareness of their children's meetings with peers, children were better integrated, according to several measures of integration. Children were also better integrated with regard to several aspects of integration when their fathers were more aware of conflicts related to family-peer issues. Also the mothers' awareness of these conflicts correlated with some of the integration measures though in a weaker way. Mothers' and fathers' knowledge of their children's friends yielded correlations with the integration measures. In the case of mothers, knowledge of friends correlated with all six aspects of integration. The fathers' correct knowledge of their children's friends was related to three of the integration measures. Interestingly, children turned out to be less integrated, when their mothers well knew their meeting places.

The differential impact of the various support behaviors on children's social integration was compared by multiple regression analyses. Predictor variables included in all models were the seven behavioral procedures distinguished in this study: "Mediation", "consultation", and the behaviors categorized as shaping of conditions, i.e., "room for action", "awareness of meetings", "awareness of conflicts", "knowledge of friends", and "knowledge of meeting places". Since preliminary analyses showed that quite a number of interaction terms combining parental behaviors and the child's gender significantly contributed to the prediction, the multiple regression models are computed and presented separately for the four parent-child dyads (cf. Table 3 and Table 4).

*Mother-son dyads*: With regard to mother-son dyads only the number of negative sociometric nominations could be predicted by the model ($R^2 = .32$; $F = 3.20$; $p < .01$; cf. Table 3). Sons received more negative votes in the sociometric test when their mothers more frequently counseled their sons, gave more room for action, were more aware of their child's conflicts between family and peer obligations, and when their mothers were less aware of their children's meetings with friends.

---

Insert Table 3 about here

---

*Mother-daughter dyads*: Four aspects of daughters' social integration could be predicted by the model: the number of nominated friends in the classroom ($R^2$ = .30; F = 2.39; p < .05), the number of nominations received in the classroom ($R^2$ = .44; F = 4.51; p < .01), the number of reciprocal nominations in the classroom ($R^2$ = .44; F = 4.44; p < .01), and the number of positive votes in the sociometric test ($R^2$ = .38; F = 3.45; p < .01; cf. Table 3). The predictions most strongly relied on mothers' knowledge of their daughter's friendships. Daughters were socially better integrated when their mothers knew who their friends were, compared to daughters whose mothers were unfamiliar with their daughter's friends. Some other supportive behaviors applied by mothers also contributed to the predictions of their daughter's social integration. When mothers conceded more room for action, when they were better aware of meetings with friends and of their child's family-peer conflicts, daughters were better integrated with regard to some aspects of integration than when mothers behaved in the opposite way.

*Father-son dyads*: The models including fathers' support behaviors predicted two aspects of their sons' social integration: the number of nominations received in the classroom ($R^2$ = .33; F = 2.37; p < .05), and the number of positive votes in the sociometric test ($R^2$ = .33; F = 2.34; p < .05; cf. Table 4). In both cases fathers' mediation behaviors negatively contributed to the prediction. Mediation behaviors, if more frequently applied, did not support, but hampered a better integration of sons in children's relationships. In contrast, fathers' consultation positively contributed to the prediction of the number of received nominations from classmates. Fathers' awareness of their son's meetings with friends contributed to the prediction of the number of positive sociometric votes. Fathers who did more counseling and payed more attention had better integrated sons.

---

Insert Table 4 about here

---

*Father-daughter dyads*: The models including fathers' support behaviors predicted five of the six aspects of their daughter's social integration: the number of children nominated in the classroom ($R^2$ = .41; F = 2.41; p < .10), the number of nominations received in the classroom ($R^2$ = .50; F = 3.49; p < .05), the number of reciprocal nominations in the classroom ($R^2$ = .49; F = 3.26; p < .05), the number of positive sociometric votes ($R^2$ = .50; F = 3.43; p < .05),

and the number of negative sociometric votes ($R^2 = .38$; $F = 2.14$; $p < .10$; cf. Table 4). The predictive power of the model mainly relied on the fathers' awareness of their daughters' family-peer conflicts. In two cases, the room for action which fathers conceded, in two other cases fathers' awareness of meetings with friends significantly contributed to the prediction. Good social integration is related to behaviors of fathers who gave room for action and who were aware of meetings with friends.

## 4. Discussion

The first and most important result of our study is that still in middle childhood children need their parents' support in order to be well integrated in peer relationships. Parents do not only affect their child's peer relationships by the quality of the early and later parent-child relationship (Cohn, Patterson, & Christopoulos, 1991), but also by a variety of behaviors which influence immediately or in a more remote way their children's interactions and relationships with agemates. These kinds of parental influence do not end with the termination of the preschool years. Also the child at the age of primary-school attendance needs parents who are aware of the intricacies of the peer world and enrich their child's opportunities to manage his or her relationships.

Our second result highlights which parental behaviors have a positive impact on the social integration of the child. While younger children need direct supervision in order to maintain peer interactions, direct supervision of older preschoolers seems to be related to lower levels of social competence (Ladd, Profilet, & Hart, 1992). Our data fit the suggested direction of development across age since the most direct form of support examined in our study, mediation, turned out to be negatively or not at all related to the social integration of the child. Also consultation is only a modest contributor to predictions. Only once consultation produces a promoting effect on social integration; in two other predictive models consultation is associated with a higher number of rejections in the sociometric test (we will comment on the predictions of rejections later).

It is mainly the parental behaviors categorized as shaping of conditions that significantly contribute to the predictions of children's social integration. These are not behaviors by which parents directly intervene, but behaviors which express concern and offer facilitation for the child's own efforts to manage relationships. Our measures record whether parents are aware of what is going on and know with whom the child is related. Parents who are informed, can support their child in a sensitive way if necessary, and take into account that children at this age must have opportunities to learn from own social experience when they should comply to

the proposals of others and when they should insist on own intentions, or what is essential for friendship and how to realize one's conception of cooperation. Thus, our data emphasize that supportive behaviors of parents must be finely tuned to the social competencies of the child so that parents neither fail to notice assistance which is sometimes urgently needed nor jeopardize the role of their child in front of the peers who reject the "babies" who cannot answer for themselves. We conclude that parents have to observe the child's zone of own productive development. The mediating efforts of fathers apparently have negative effects because they disregard the delicate balance of dependence on support and need of autonomy.

The third result refers to the question whether mothers' and fathers' behaviors are effective in the same way with regard to the social integration of daughters or sons. Earlier studies produced contradictory results. While MacDonald and Parke (1984) found differences in the influences of fathers' and mothers' behaviors on the peer status of daughters and sons at preschool age, another study of Bhavnagri and Parke (1991) revealed no differences in the capacity of mothers and fathers to assist their child in maintaining peer interaction. Our analyses of the dyadic family subsystems are in line with the observation that the effects of support behaviors are shaped by the dyads in which they are embedded. For example, fathers' behaviors are related to the number of negative sociometric votes received by daughters, whereas mothers' behaviors have impact of the negative votes received by sons. Overall, fathers' and mothers' behaviors are more relevant in the prediction of their daughter's than of their son's social integration. Perhaps the social ups and downs of sons are already less under the influence of parents at this age.

Fathers and mothers exert their influences in differing ways. Fathers seem to be sensitive for the separation issue as the predictive models show that the behaviors of fathers which contribute to the prediction, reflect understanding for the own room which peer relationships need and awareness of zones of conflict between family and peer obligations. Perhaps they also realize dangers and act cautiously towards daughters. With regard to sons, whose social life seems to be less under the influence of the parents, fathers tend to violate the demands of increasing independence. Their mediating efforts may be interpreted as intrusion by their sons and, therefore, have negative effects. Again we have to consider the possibility that fathers intervene when sons play a negative role among peers. Among the behaviors of mothers only the procedures which are categorized as shaping of conditions are related to the social integration of their children. Predictions from mothers' behaviors mainly draw on their knowledge of the friendships which their daughters maintain. This may indicate that daughters are well integrated when they can clearly communicate with their mothers about their relationships. Thus, differing influences of fathers and mothers are beyond doubt, but the specific

role that both parents fulfill in the promotion of their children's social integration needs further clarification.

The fourth result refers to the aspects of social integration that could be predicted by the behaviors of parents. In none of the dyads the model did allow to predict the total number of relationships which children claim to maintain and differentially describe. The predictions were only possible with regard to the measures which add some qualification to the mere number of relationships. Are parents more relevant for the quality than for the extension of peer systems? We believe that our data do not allow to substantiate this speculation. Although we know that sociometric tests measure popularity and the interview relationships, the analyses revealed no differences between the prediction of the sociometrically based or interview based integration measures that would tell us for which aspects of social integration which of the behaviors applied by parents are especially important.

Looking back on the results obtained by the analyses we find a number of puzzling results which remind us of the bidirectionality of the influences to which Ladd, Profilet, and Hart (1992) recently gave emphasis. The awareness of parents that their children are well integrated may cause parents to withdraw from active involvement, and poor social integration noticed by parents may stimulate their activities. We are not able to disentangle these opposite influences which seem to be especially visible in the prediction of the number of negative votes. The prediction of a high number of negative votes received by girls relied on a low awareness of family-peer conflicts and high efforts to counsel the daughter from the side of fathers. While the first correlation may be interpreted as failed attention to a burdening conflict, the latter may be understood in two ways. Either the father is damaging the social reputation of the daughter by restraining her own responsibility, or the father reacts to the unfavorable peer status of the daughter and disregards that she has a problem of balancing family and peer obligations. A similar ambivalent pattern of interpretation applies to the behaviors of mothers which are significantly contributing to the predictions of the number of negative votes received by their sons. Mothers of sons who receive a high number of rejections, take efforts to counsel their sons, are very aware of family-peer conflicts, but are not well informed about their sons' meetings with friends. They also tend to give much room for action. Some of the correlations may indicate neglect which causes maladjustment to peers, others may demonstrate a reaction to preceding low acceptance of the child among peers which aims at improving the child's peer relationships.

Also other correlations which are interpreted as a demonstration of successful parental support may likewise result from a parental reaction to the children's autonomously achieved integration into peer relationships. For instance, it is hard to decide from commonsense know-

ledge whether conceded room for action should be regarded as a sensitive parental means of allowing the child to collect own experiences which promote peer competence or, on the contrary, as a reaction of parents to the transition of the child into the relatively autonomous culture of childhood which has its own status in modern societies. We need further investigation to understand the interwoven effects. Children who face difficulties with peers, most probably are an especially instructive field of further inquiry.

**References:**

Bhavnagri, N.P. & Parke, R.D. (1991) 'Parents as Direct Facilitators of Children's Peer Relationships: Effects of Age of Child and Sex of Parent' *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships Vol. 8*: 423-440.

Cohn, D.A.; Patterson, Ch.J. & Christopoulos Ch. (1991) 'The Family and Children's Peer Relations' *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships Vol. 8*: 315-346.

Krappmann, L. (1989) Family Relationships and Peer Relationships in Middle Childhood: An Exploratory Study of the Associations between Children's Integration into the Social Network of Peers and Family Development, in: Kreppner, K. & Lerner, R.M. (Ed. ) *Family Systems and Life Span Development*, pp. 93-104. Erlbaum: Hillsdale, NJ, and London.

Krappmann, L.; Oswald, H.; v. Salisch, M.; Schuster, B.; Uhlendorff, H. & Weiss, K. (1991) *Das Freundesinterview. Ein Instrument zur Erhebung der Sozialbeziehungen von Kindern im Alter von sechs bis zwölf Jahren.* Berlin: Max Planck Institute for Human Development and Education/Freie Universität of Berlin.

Ladd, G.W. (1991) 'Family-Peer Relations during Childhood: Pathways to Competence and Pathology?' *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships Vol. 8*: 307-314.

Ladd, G.W. & Golter, B.S. (1988) 'Parent's Management of Preschooler's Peer Relations: Is it Related to Children's Social Competence?' *Developmental Psychology Vol. 24*: 109-117

Ladd, G.W.; Profilet, S.M. & Hart, C.H. (1992) 'Parent's Management of Children's Peer Relations: Facilitating and Supervising Children's Activities in the Peer Culture. in: Parke, R.D. & Ladd, G.W. (Ed. ) Family-Peer Relationships. *Modes of Linkage*, pp. 215-254. Hillsdale, N.J.: Hove and London.

MacDonald, K. & Parke, R.D. (1984) 'Bridging the Gap: Parent-Child Play Interaction and Peer Interactive Competence' *Child Deveopment Vol. 55*: 1265-1277.

Oswald, H.; Krappmann, L.; Uhlendorff, H. & Weiss, K. (1993) 'Social Relationships and Support among Children of the Same Age in Middle Childhood' in: Hurrelmann, K. & Nestmann, F. (Ed. ) *Social Support and Social Networks in Childhood and Adolescence*. Berlin: DeGruyter (in press).

Parke, R.D. & Bhavnagri, N. (1989) 'Parents as Managers of Children's Peer Relationships', in Belle, D. (Ed. ) *Children's Social Networks and Social Supports*, pp. 241-259. New York: Wiley.

Piaget, J. (1932) *The Moral Judgment of the Child*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul..

Putallaz, M. & Heflin, A.H. (1990) 'Parent-Child Interaction', in Asher, S.R. & Coie, J.D. (Ed. ) *Peer Rejection in Childhood*, pp. 189-216. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Russell, G. & Russell, A. (1987) 'Mother-Child and Father-Child Relationships in Middle Childhood' *Child Development Vol. 58*: 1573-1585.

Sullivan, H.S. (1953) *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry*. New York: Norton.

Youniss, J. (1980) *Parents and Peers in Social Development: A Sullivan-Piaget Perspective*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

FIGURE 1

LEVELS OF PARENTAL SUPPORT
TO THE CHILD'S SOCIAL INTEGRATION

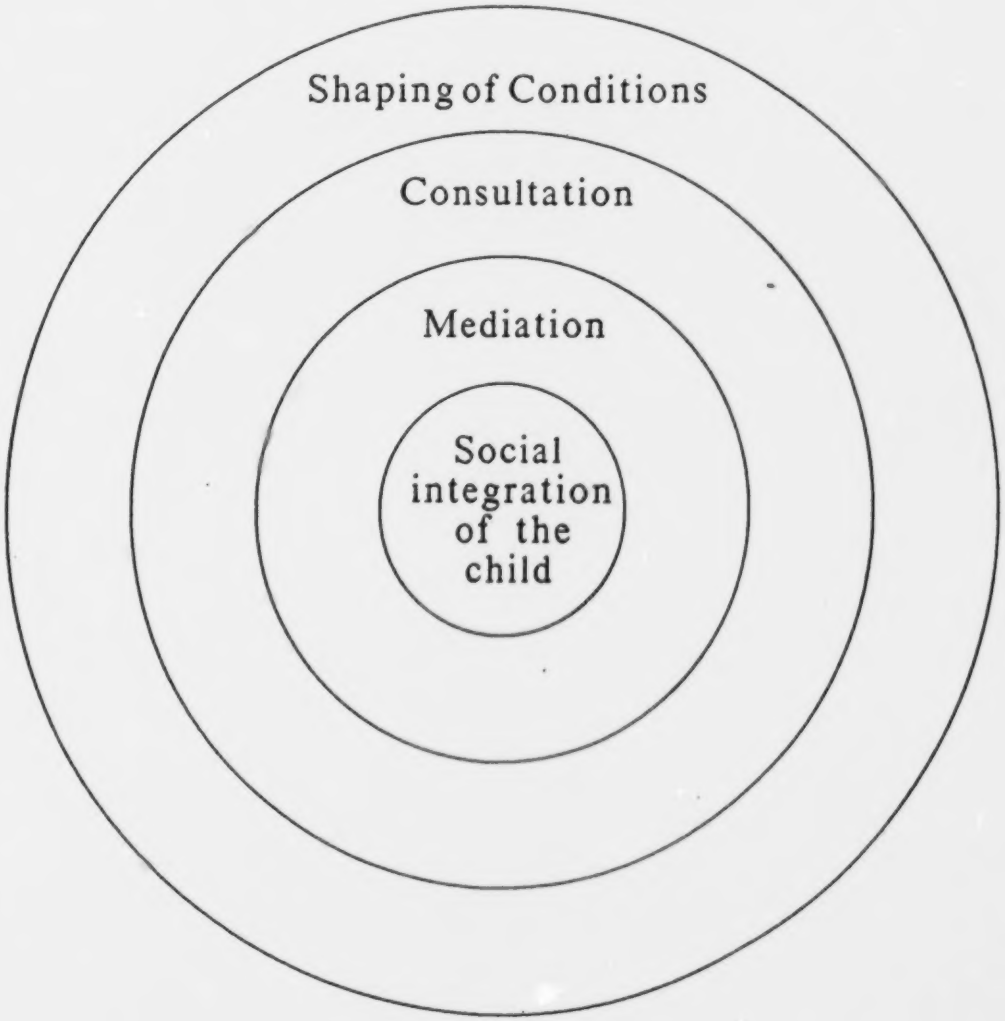

Table 1

## Parental Support Behaviors

(Mothers' N = 113; Fathers' N = 79)

| | Mean | Standard Dev. |
|---|---|---|
| **Mediation** | | |
| Mothers | 13.03 | 3.72 |
| Fathers | 12.09 | 3.17 |
| **Consultation** | | |
| Mothers | 21.89 | 5.87 |
| Fathers | 18.61 | 6.02 |
| **Shaping of Conditions** | | |
| **Room for Action** | | |
| Mothers | 15.18 | 3.64 |
| Fathers | 16.23 | 3.49 |
| **Awareness of meetings** | | |
| Mothers | 10.75 | 2.86 |
| Fathers | 11.23 | 2.72 |
| **Awareness of Conflicts** | | |
| Mothers | 11.79 | 2.44 |
| Fathers | 11.69 | 2.09 |
| **Knowledge About Friends** | | |
| Mothers | 4.33 | 1.71 |
| Fathers | 3.95 | 1.82 |
| **Knowledge About Meeting Places** | | |
| Mothers | 4.05 | .68 |
| Fathers | 4.18 | .53 |

Table 2

**Bivariate Correlations of parental support behaviors and measures of children's social integration**
(Mothers' N = 109; Fathers' N = 76)

| | Number of Relationships | Child's Nomination of Classmates | Received Nominations in the Classroom | Reciprocal Nominations in the Classroom | Positive Sociometric Votes | Negative Sociometric Votes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mediation** | | | | | | |
| Mothers | .04 | .09 | .13(•) | .18* | -.06 | .04 |
| Fathers | -.13 | -.04 | -.01 | -.01 | -.09 | .14 |
| **Consultation** | | | | | | |
| Mothers | .08 | -.07 | -.04 | -.02 | -.11 | .19* |
| Fathers | .06 | .08 | .26* | .13 | .00 | .18(•) |
| **Shaping of Conditions** | | | | | | |
| **Room for Action** | | | | | | |
| Mothers | .10 | .16(•) | .13(•) | .28** | .13(•) | .10 |
| Fathers | .08 | .15(•) | .10 | .27** | .07 | .08 |
| **Awareness of meetings** | | | | | | |
| Mothers | .06 | .07 | .30** | .24** | .24** | .02 |
| Fathers | .07 | .16(•) | .25* | .18(•) | .33** | -.08 |
| **Awareness of Conflicts** | | | | | | |
| Mothers | .05 | .05 | .13(•) | .07 | .20* | .14(•) |
| Fathers | .06 | .18(•) | .36** | .31** | .29** | -.21* |
| **Knowledge About Friends** | | | | | | |
| Mothers | .25** | .31** | .20* | .36** | .29** | -.22* |
| Fathers | .07 | .11 | .14 | .27** | .28** | -.19* |
| **About Meeting Places** | | | | | | |
| Mothers | -.02 | -.05 | -.14(•) | -.19* | .01 | -.00 |
| Fathers | -.06 | .03 | .04 | .02 | -.08 | -.00 |

** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$ (•) $p < .10$

Table 3

**Multiple Regressions of children's social integration on mothers' support behaviors**
(Mother's N = 103; Daughter's N = 48; Son's N = 55)

| Parental Support Behaviors | Number of Relationships | | Child's Nominations of Classmates | | Received Nominations in the Classroom | | Reciprocal Nominations in the Classroom | | Positive sociometric votes | | Negative sociometric votes | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Daughters | Sons | Daughters | Sons | Daughters | Sons | Daughters | Sons | Daughters | Sons | Daughters | Sons |
| Mediation | (.00) | (-.10) | (.05) | (.18) | (.02) | .31(*) | (.12) | (.17) | (.03) | (-.19) | (-.07) | (-.04) |
| Consultation | (-.18) | .35* | (-.16) | (-.08) | (.00) | (-.17) | (.00) | (-.05) | (.05) | (.02) | (.09) | .31* |
| Room for action | (.20) | (-.13) | (.24) | (-.12) | (.06) | (-.14) | .33* | (-.07) | (.22) | (-.05) | (-.01) | .27(*) |
| Awareness of meetings | (.05) | (-.01) | (.12) | (-.05) | .33* | (.25) | (.16) | (.17) | (-.06) | .27(*) | (.23) | -.25(*) |
| Awareness of conflicts | (.25) | (-.04) | .26 (*) | (-.11) | (.15) | (-.15) | (.13) | (-.13) | (.22) | (.05) | (.03) | .40** |
| Knowledge of friends | (.13) | .34 * | (.23) | .27(*) | .42** | (-.05) | .37** | .32* | .49** | (.18) | -.48* | (-.21) |
| Knowledge of meeting places | (.09) | (-.01) | (.11) | (-.13) | (-.16) | (-.18) | (-.16) | (-.15) | (-.23) | (-.16) | (.22) | (-.17) |
| $R^2$ | (.19) | (.18) | .30 | (.12) | .44 | (.13) | .44 | (.20) | .38 | (.18) | (.19) | .32 |
| F | | | 2.39 | | 4.51 | | 4.44 | | 3.45 | | | 3.20 |
| p | | | p < .05 | | p < .01 | | p < .01 | | p < .01 | | | p < .01 |

** p < .01 * p < .05 (*) p< .10

Table 4

**Multiple Regressions of children's social integration on fathers' support behaviors**
(Father's N = 73; Daughter's N = 32; Son's N = 41)

| Parental Support Behaviors | Number of Relationships | | Child's Nominations of Classmates | | Received Nominations in the Classroom | | Reciprocal Nominations in the Classroom | | Positive sociometric votes | | Negative sociometric votes | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Daughters | Sons | Daughters | Sons | Daughters | Sons | Daughters | Sons | Daughters | Sons | Daughters | Sons |
| Mediation | (-.05) | -.41(*) | (-.10) | (-.16) | (-.22) | -.46* | -.34(*) | (-.27) | (-.03) | -.41* | (.14) | (.07) |
| Consultation | (.07) | (.28) | (-.01) | (.25) | (.08) | .60** | (.18) | .33(*) | (.05) | (.16) | .32(*) | (.04) |
| Room for action | (.15) | (.18) | (.28) | (.04) | .29(*) | (.14) | .55** | (.11) | (.03) | (.00) | (-.03) | (.15) |
| Awareness of meetings | .38(*) | -.33(*) | .43* | (-.02) | .33* | (.13) | (-.05) | (.27) | (.07) | .47(*) | (-.08) | (-.10) |
| Awareness of conflicts | (.04) | (.04) | (.08) | (.23) | .54** | (.25) | .45** | .28(*) | .59** | (.03) | -.49* | (.09) |
| Knowledge of friends | (.00) | (.29) | (.17) | (.04) | (-.04) | (.03) | (.17) | (.08) | (.21) | (.09) | (-.08) | (-.24) |
| Knowledge of meeting places | (.12) | (-.22) | .32(*) | (-.20) | (.21) | (.09) | (.10) | (.00) | (-.18) | (.08) | (-.08) | (.05) |
| $R^2$ | (.20) | (.26) | .41 | (.16) | .50 | .33 | .49 | (.28) | .50 | .33 | .38 | (.10) |
| F | | | 2.41 | | 3.49 | 2.37 | 3.26 | | 3.43 | 2.34 | 2.14 | |
| p | | | p < .10 | | p < .05 | p < .05 | p < .05 | | p < .05 | p < .05 | p < .10 | |

** p < .01 * p < .05 (*) p< .10

# Abstract

Peer interactions and relationships contribute in their own way to the development of competencies of children (Piaget, 1932; Youniss, 1980). Although in middle childhood children establish their social relationships more and more independently, apparently parents still influence their children's social life. While research has examined the ways in which parents support peer interactions in early childhood (Bhavnagri & Parke, 1991), behaviors by which parents support their child´s peer relationships during middle childhood, await further clarification. The study presented here analyses the impact of different ways of parental support on children´s social integration in peer relationships in middle childhood.

Using a standardized procedure, 255 children from grade 2 to 5 of an inner-city primary school in Berlin (West) were interviewed about their friends. Since complete classrooms participated, also sociometric tests were conducted. Mothers (N = 113) and fathers (N = 79) of a representative subsample of 116 children were interviewed separately at home about their support behaviors and other behaviors relevant for their child´s peer interactions and relationships.

Although mothers' and fathers' support behaviors are correlated, the impact of mothers´ and fathers´ behaviors on the child´s relationships varies with regard to the sex of the child. Therefore, the influence of parents on their child´ social integration is examined with regard to the four family dyads. Multiple regression analyses show that daughters´ and sons´ social integration can be predicted by mothers´ and fathers´ support behaviors still in middle childhood. Especially the behaviors categorized as "shaping of conditions" significantly contribute to the predictions. Mediation, defined as immediate involvement in the child's peer interactions and relationships, and consultation, defined as coaching and counseling of the child, is less beneficial or even contraproductive to the child's social integration. The study gives some indications that parental behaviors may also be elicited by the children´s position among peers.

PS 021 584



BEST COPY AVAILABLE